



U.S. ROUTE 1 / TELEGRAPH ROAD CONNECTOR **ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY**

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the website for the environmental study for the proposed U.S. Route 1 (Richmond Highway) and Telegraph Road (VA Route 611) Connector through Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, Virginia. This website is intended to provide timely and useful information regarding the study.

There are seven components of this overview:

- Background and overview of the study
- Development of improvements
- Purpose and need for the study
- Information about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Contact information
- Schedule
- Public Participation

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Fort Belvoir is situated in southeastern Fairfax County, covering approximately 8,600 acres. Nearly 24,000 military and civilian personnel work on this military installation, and it is home to nearly 2,000 military families. The Fort also houses several U.S. military establishments and facilities, including the U.S. Army Materiel Command, the Defense Logistics Agency, and Davison Army Airfield. Humphreys Engineering Center is contiguous to Fort Belvoir and is also included in the study area.

Following the Oklahoma City bombing in the 1990's, the Federal government became more concerned about providing additional security measures at existing Federal installations. As a consequence, the U.S. Army at Fort Belvoir had been developing procedures for full access control and planning improved infrastructure to address additional security.

“Full access control” means vehicles will be allowed on Post only through guarded gates where only authorized vehicles enter, and also that all visitors will be accounted for.

Following the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) summarily closed public access to military installations. Fort Belvoir, in turn, closed both the Woodlawn Road (VA Route 618) and Beulah Street (VA Route 613) entrances to the Fort to the general public, thus eliminating public access to the two roads. **[[[See map of Project Locale.]]]** These two roads traverse the northern portion of the Fort between Telegraph Road to the north and U.S. Route 1 to the south; and served to provide access between residential, commercial, and employment locations in southeast Fairfax County.

In 2002, through cooperation among Fort Belvoir, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Fairfax County and elected officials, the gate at Telegraph Road and Beulah Street was re-opened to private vehicles displaying current DoD decals. While re-opening this specific gate eliminated circuitous routing of authorized private automobiles destined for the Fort facilities, it did not offer accessibility or through access to the general public. The Army has stated that it has no current plans to reestablish this public access.

The initial steps to reestablish the lost highway connection were undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), Baltimore District, which conducted a Preliminary Feasibility Study (Phase I) of the Richmond Highway and Telegraph Road Connector, Fairfax County, VA that was completed in November 2003 (Feasibility Study). That Feasibility Study was directed by the FY 2003 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 367 [Public Law 107-314, December 2, 2002, Appendix A], which also specified the Army “should consider as one alternative the extension of Old Mill Road between Richmond Highway and Telegraph Road.” [\[\[\[See link to the Feasibility Study\]\]\]](#)

The Feasibility Study not only identified and generally evaluated a number of routes to replace the access formerly provided by Woodlawn Road and Beulah Street, but also involved a collaborative effort among the many interested agencies and the public. It involved numerous agency stakeholder meetings, opportunities for review by the public at two public meetings, and close coordination with Fort Belvoir. [\[\[\[See map of COE alternative routes.\]\]\]](#) While the Feasibility Study specifically did not recommend any alternatives due to the preliminary nature of the study, subsequently the Army identified a corridor called Alternative C, the extension of Old Mill Road, as its preferred alternative. The present U.S. Route 1/Telegraph Road Connector Environmental Study will evaluate several alternatives to replacing the closed roads, including that alternative.

DEVELOPMENT OF IMPROVEMENTS

The public highway improvements intended to replace the capacity lost by the closing of Woodlawn Road and Beulah Street are proposed for execution through DoD’s Defense Access Road (DAR) Program. The replacement road, when completed, is expected to become the responsibility of VDOT. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the lead Federal agency working with VDOT and DOD. FHWA is the approving authority for this environmental study and co-administers the DAR Program for DoD.

Replacement of the general north-south public highway connection eliminated by the closing of Woodlawn Road and Beulah Street is the proposed action. Statutes regarding replacement of public highways, closed due to military necessity, are noted in the public law excerpted below:

(a) **The Secretary is authorized, out of the funds appropriated for defense access roads**, to provide for the construction and maintenance of defense access roads (including bridges, tubes, and tunnels thereon) to military reservations, to defense industries and defense industry sites, and to the sources of raw materials when such roads are certified to the Secretary as important to the national defense by the Secretary of Defense or such other official as the President may designate, and **for replacing existing highways and highway connections that are shut off from the general public use by necessary closures or restrictions at military reservations and defense industry sites.** <emphasis added>

Source: United States Code, Title 23 – Highways, Chapter 2 – Other Highways, Section 210. Defense Access Roads

The proposed replacement road also conforms with the anticipated transportation element of the North Post Master Plan Update, currently under preparation by the Fort. The Master Plan, which supports Army/DoD mission activities on the Fort, is expected to indicate a replacement roadway connecting Telegraph Road and Richmond Highway in the study area. The draft Master Plan was expected to be available to the public in the Spring of 2005, but the pending Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations have revised that schedule.

Federal funding from the DoD's DAR is expected to cover construction costs for at least two lanes of the Connector Road facility; additional funding mechanisms are being sought from other sources. While NEPA may consider cost in the decision-making process, funding itself is not a NEPA issue.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Purpose and Need for the project, in the simplest terms, is to replace the once-public access provided by VA Route 618 (Woodlawn Road) and VA Route 613 (Beulah Street) between Route 1 and Telegraph Road. The current traffic congestion and delay, resulting in part from the 9/11/2001 road closures, require the provision of a new connection alternative. In this section of Fairfax County, the removal of those alternative access routes substantially diminished the flexibility of traffic movement. To the southwest of the general project study area, the Fairfax County Parkway offers a major thoroughfare. However, no other direct connection exists between Route 1 and Telegraph Road for over six miles between the Fairfax County Parkway in the southwest and the Kings Highway / Richmond Highway intersection to the northeast. Only limited circuitous routing between Telegraph Road and Route 1 exists through local communities in the area.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

This environmental study is being undertaken in accordance with the *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)* of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) *Regulations for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act*, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) NEPA regulations and procedures for preparing environmental documents, as well as other applicable laws, Executive Orders, and regulations. [NEPA is found at 23 U.S.C. 109 (h). The CEQ Regulations are contained in 40 CFR 1500-1508; and the FHWA NEPA regulations contained in 23 CFR 771.]

NEPA requires the examination of potential impacts to the social and natural environment and an evaluation of alternatives when considering approval of proposed federal actions, which in this case would be a replacement roadway. Measures necessary to mitigate adverse impacts will be incorporated into the action. Public participation will be a component of the study.

The intent at the study outset is to avoid significant impacts to the environment through avoidance, minimization and mitigation of impacts. FHWA currently anticipates an Environmental Assessment (EA) to be the NEPA document developed to render a decision document on the NEPA process. Without prejudicing the result of this study, FHWA has benefit of the earlier COE *Feasibility Study* and its data and rationale applied to potential alternatives. A study area has been delineated by the FHWA in which potential alternatives are being evaluated.. **[[[See map of NEPA Study Area.]]]** The alternative routes identified for the NEPA

study may make use of existing roads and right-of-way as well as new alignments. As a result of meetings with the agency stakeholders and the public, FHWA proposes no further consideration of any alternatives for this project that traverse Huntley Meadows Park.

CONTACTS

Key stakeholders to the project study process are:

- Federal Highway Administration
- HDR Engineering, Inc. (Consultant for FHWA)
- US Army Garrison Fort Belvoir, Directorate of Public Works (DPW)
- U.S. Army Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, Defense Access Road Program Manager
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Humphreys Engineering Center Support Activity
- Fairfax County Department of Transportation
- Virginia Department of Transportation

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SCHEDULE

Preparation of the Environmental Assessment (EA) was originally planned for 12 months to the Decision Document. Given additional data collection efforts, citizen input, and coordination regarding potential impacts to historic resources, the schedule now assumes public availability

of the EA document in the Winter 2006. **[[See Project Schedule-October 2005.]]** Another public information meeting has been added to the schedule.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Three public information meetings are planned as part of this study effort. The first was conducted on February 17, 2005. That was a project kick-off, showing the then-available data. **[[[See February 2005 Public Meeting Information.]]]** Subsequently, additional meetings with key agencies and groups and collection of further information has occurred. The second Public Meeting is to be held in the end of October 2005. That meeting will allow the public to review the activities involved during the Spring and Summer, as the process of identifying and evaluating alternative alignments has progressed. The third Public Meeting is expected after the EA document is released.

In advance of the meetings, FHWA places notices in local newspapers, and sends an announcement to anyone on the project mailing list.

A **Citizens Task Force** was created following the February public information meeting. In June and August, 2005, FHWA met with representatives appointed by Supervisors Hyland and Kauffman. Other meetings are expected. Each meeting updates the Task Force as to the latest coordination and data collection efforts, and includes discussion of approach and rationale.

Example topics reviewed with the Citizens Task Force have included:

- NEPA process
- Feedback from Public Meeting
- Typical sections
- Alternatives development
- Traffic Modeling assumptions
- Intersection levels of service
- Access issues
- Existing Conditions
- Options for Woodlawn Plantation

FHWA encourages anyone who has an interest in this project to request to be placed on the Project Mailing List in order to assure notification of the next public information meeting.